

The Food Group Presents

A Taste of Rutland:
Exploring Rutland County's Local Food Movement

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Introduction

At the beginning of the semester, the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL) tasked us with identifying those groups and individuals in the Rutland County community that do not connect with their mission even though they might source a large portion of their food from the local area. They also asked us to investigate why these groups and individuals are not connecting with RAFFL and how RAFFL can do a better job of reaching them.

In general, we were incredibly impressed with the thoroughness of RAFFL's approach, their strong positive impact on the community, and their commitment to economically supporting Vermont's working landscape. We also found that many of the issues RAFFL and Rutland face in terms of maximizing community support for local farmers are the same as challenges faced by other communities across the country. We did identify a unique quality to Rutland and Vermont, however, which could make this place a model for local food in the coming years.

Methods

Interview Process

We used two main approaches to understand Rutland's food movement and identify points of disconnection. First, we conducted twelve long form interviews with individuals from a variety of food backgrounds: farmers, gardeners, restaurateurs, hunters, anglers, and even an insurance agent. In these interviews, we ordered our questions very carefully

to avoid bias toward the local food movement. We began simply, with questions about their occupation and living in Vermont, then slowly transitioned into questions about food and how they feed themselves and their families and then finally, at the very end of the interview, we asked how they engage with local food and what the “local food movement” means for them. The responses we got were both inspiring and critical.

Our long form interview population was slightly self-selecting, however. We contacted individuals disconnected from the local food movement as we wanted to figure out why. However, they often denied interviews because they could not understand how their responses could be helpful to us as they stated that they knew nothing about local food. They did not understand, and we had trouble communicating, that this disconnect was exactly the reason we wanted to speak with them.

Second, we conducted five short surveys and short form interviews. In the short surveys we stood outside two very different food centers, Tops Discount Market and the Rutland Winter Farmer’s Market. Outside Tops, we asked a very simple question of those individuals entering and leaving the market when they bought food and foodstuffs: “What is most important to you when purchasing food?” We were very surprised by the variety of responses. Outside the farmer’s market we asked additional questions about why individuals valued the farmer’s market and why they made the decision to shop there.

We also went to Rutland High School, the Vermont Outdoor Show, and Vermont Field Sports to inquire further into questions about food education and the disconnect between hunters and anglers and the local food movement. These were slightly more formal settings than the grocery and market intercept surveys discussed in the previous

paragraph, but still consisted of relatively candid conversations about food, education, hunting, and life in Rutland County.

In each of these five short surveys, the population we drew on was completely random. This was purposeful, so that we could compare what we found from our long form interviewees, who were at least relatively warned as to the purpose of our project, to the opinions of individuals we encountered around the Rutland area who did not know our position on local food. We found that the responses regarding the benefits and challenges of eating local food and the local food movement were highly complementary across long interviews and short surveys, indicating the authenticity of the responses we received. This consistency also allowed us to identify major themes associated with eating local and from this we were able to identify both issues and solutions that could strengthen the Rutland local food movement even further.

Product Creation

We conducted all long form interviews with a high-quality video camera in tow so that we could use the information we collected and turn it into a digital video narrative that RAFFL could advertise and use to open a dialogue about the future of local food in Rutland County. Most of the time we split up into groups of two in order to conduct long form interviews. We would find the quietest room possible and set up the video camera with a tripod and have one person ask questions and guide the conversation while the other manned the camera. This guaranteed that the camera was always functioning and that the person being interviewed directed their eyes at one individual only, the group member asking questions, in order to keep eye contact consistent. In a few instances, we were not insistent enough about sound quality and silence and performed interviews in coffee shops

or other places with a lot of background noise. While these were quality interviews full of valuable information, we could not use them at all in our final video. While those types of casual meetings are wonderful for the purpose of purely collecting information, we found that it paid off to insist upon quiet meeting places in order to gain valuable footage.

We borrowed our video camera from Middlebury College. Unfortunately, the library and the film department loan out their digital video cameras for the entire semester to students in film classes and students recording theses. This meant that we were unable to obtain access to a high quality digital camera. Instead, we went to the film department and checked out one of their high quality analog cameras. We made this decision in order to guarantee film quality. It did mean a slightly longer workflow, however, because we had to purchase digital tapes from the bookstore and then use a VCR deck to convert those tapes into digital information readable on a computer. After importing, we used the software Final Cut Pro X, which two of our group members were very familiar with, in order to edit our video. Previous experience with Final Cut was necessary to make our film successfully; it would have taken too much time to try to make a video while simultaneously learning the program for the first time.

For three of the short surveys—at the school, at Vermont Field Sports, and at the Vermont Outdoor Show—we also used a video camera and brought along a tape recorder for extra audio. Outside the two markets we only used a tape recorder. While we would have loved to capture visual information from those interviews, we found that people react much more negatively to being video taped than being merely voice recorded. With the recorder, responses could be anonymous and random passersby would feel more inclined to give us a few minutes of their time and indulge their honest opinion. Because we used

the less imposing voice recorder, those interviews collected outside the markets were some of the most valuable information we received. Incorporating it into our video was a creative challenge, to be sure, but the interview method yielded such interesting results it was worth the effort.

We have provided a host of final products to our community partner, RAFFL, this semester. First is the video which we are hosting on a Wix website that we also created. The idea is to make the video as accessible to the public as possible by posting it online. Second, we wrote six short newspaper articles in order to advertise the video and start critical discussions about eating local. These newspaper articles are divided between profile story pieces about some of the people we interviewed and themes—such as unconventional local food—that add interesting dynamics to the ongoing dialogue. We hope the newspaper articles, the video, and our website will allow RAFFL to roll out this advertising campaign this summer after we graduate. We also provided RAFFL this report that includes a write-up of our interview findings (organized by theme) and audio recording of all of our interviews so that they can utilize the information for future campaigns. Lastly, for our presentation, we created a poster that has general findings and information from our project, as well as a couple of word clouds that we created from some of our long-form interviews.

Results

Below we have included a write-up of quotes from our interviews organized by theme. The interview excerpts include points at which people identified room for improvement within the local food movement. They also include some unconventional

approaches to local food that might prove useful to RAFFL as they continue expanding Rutland's local food movement as part of the County's creative economy.

Theme 1: Press and Public Relations

"It takes really word of mouth from somebody's friend who goes down to the farmer's market and all of a sudden discovers that's a great thing and goes back and tells ten of their friends kind of thing. Or with this whole social media thing they stick it on Facebook or whatever and somebody says "oh well if they're doing it,".... And we're seeing more and more of that." –BJ Hathaway

"Not everybody knows about the Farmer's Food Center, not everybody knows about RAFFL, not everybody knows about farmers in the area. You think Rutland city, there's no farms around here, but there's actually quite a few within a 10-minute drive. It's very interesting. To get the message out better, obviously they don't have an exorbitant amount of money to work with or an elaborate budget, so they probably aren't doing a lot of public relations or advertising of it. Obviously they are probably doing local advertising, but they don't have a national campaign going or TV commercials, things like that.... They can only reach so many people with the budget that they have." –Brian Perkins

"Getting back to the RAFFL message, it probably comes down to a PR campaign. I don't know what their budget is. I don't know if they even have money to do that, but they have this magazine,... word of mouth is the best way to spread things. It doesn't cost anything. Referrals, you know talking to you guys about what RAFFL does. That doesn't cost anything. The more people that talk it up and talk about the farmer's food center, the farmer's market, RAFFL, the farm bureau, there's a lot of different things to talk about. If everybody learns about it and talks about it, that's the easiest way to get the message out." –Brian Perkins

"Like if Perkins Agency wanted to buy something, put in a large order or something, that would be awesome. I've never heard of that. And then you could publicize that. If they're not doing it now, promote it. Talk it up... advertise it.... I've heard of it now and I'll spread the word. That's the most cost-effective way to do it is word of mouth." –Brian Perkins

"Once again, this is really from an outsider looking in. So I don't know all the inner workings.... It seems like they don't have enough PR going, enough advertising going.... It costs money to advertise, but if you don't advertise you're not going to get the word out. So you need to spread the word... (Describing best ways...) Through local newspapers... the Herald. Sam's good news. Lot of different other local papers. TV commercials, one of the most mass communications but there's a cost with that. It also costs more to do that. Social media... really don't cost hardly anything. Young Professionals Mixer. Have a chamber mixer if RAFFL is a member of the chamber they could host a mixer. A mix and mingle for two hours." –Brian Perkins

"It might be... if in fact... when corn season comes out and corn can be sold inexpensively wouldn't that be a treat to let folks know there's this wonderful fresh corn that's right there that does support folks, I don't know if that comes out on paper or that comes out on twitter on all the social media... you know here's what it's doing" –Pat Menduni

Theme 2: Consumer Education

"I think some of it is educating people. Like right now, to get people to go to the farmers market, if that's not part of their Saturday routine, you have to get them to change their routine a little bit to come, and a lot of people I talk to down there, they've said the same thing: they had to make a conscious effort to change their normal routine. Instead of grocery shopping on a Thursday afternoon or Thursday night after work, they plan their Saturday morning to come down at 10:00 and do their shopping and then maybe they do their trash run to the dump or whatever their other Saturday activities are. Part of it is a matter of changing people's patterns I guess. And how you do that I'm not entirely sure." – BJ Hathaway

"There's another thing where you have to educate the community, you have to teach them to cook. A lot of people don't know how to cook. When I was in college, I had like Mac & Cheese and spaghetti dinners and things like that, fairly basic things. I mean, I could get by but it wasn't a full meal or anything. That's probably why I gained a lot of weight but... (LAUGHS) Now I know how to cook. My wife, Vicky knows how to cook. I mean you have to educate the community on how to cook these vegetables, these fruits from farmer's market or the grocery store. That's one challenge, that a lot of people really don't know how to cook or don't know what to eat. They have bad lifestyles." –Brian Perkins

"From my experience, it's been family. My parents, my mom, my grandmother have taught me. Vicky and I kind of experiment with meals and different ways to cook. We get our education mostly from family. A lot of people aren't in a fortunate situation like that so they don't have a family to kind of teach them about a full balanced meal or Sunday dinner, things like that. It comes down to what you read in the paper, what you read in magazines, what you watch on TV, the Food Network, whatever. But then there's also a more proactive way to do it. There's doing in person seminars or in-person educational time for people that are good at cooking to kind of teach the average Joe how to cook. I don't know if it would be in the form of formal classes at Middlebury or Castleton or CCV or CSJ, wherever. That might be a good solution, to educate the general population how to cook better, how to eat better. You take some produce and you can make 3 or 4 dishes out of it. Some people don't even know how to turn the stove on so it comes down to getting that message out. It's very difficult. ..." –Brian Perkins

"I think that people at home have a hard time understanding that you can go to the farmers market, purchase food for 4 days, go home, take a chicken, roast it, do what you're going to do with it, break it down, make a stock, take the vegetables, make a soup, freeze it so you have some for later and do this for lunch tomorrow. It's a process. And I think that a lot of that comes from energy. You have to be able to take that and do all that work in a half a day

or a day, however long it takes. but it's possible and I think that's where the education piece comes into play. Educating people how to do that. It makes complete sense, but maybe that's where it starts." –Donald Billings

"Basically there's a lot of education that needs to go on about working with a seasonal kitchen most of all, because people need to learn how to cook with the things that are available in any particular season. And that's a steep learning curve because we're all used to walking into the grocery store at any time of year and getting fresh strawberries, fresh tomatoes, whatever. We even get fresh squash in the middle of summer. We're just used to that, and it's going to take some educating to switch that over to having a seasonal kitchen and cooking with what's available in season. And also there are so many people now who are totally divorced from the land, that they don't even think about where their food comes from. And bringing them back to reality is going to be important." –Green's Sugar House

"I think there's still a lot of work to be done. I think RAFFL has done a really good job...some of the farmers markets have done a really good job spreading the word and stuff, others seem to just be there. But you know it's just really important to have a group within each community who are neighbors to everyone and who encourage people to participate in that local food movement. I think that's where most people are gonna get convinced that it's a good idea- when they see their neighbors participating in it, and when people like us and the local famers around here who sell vegetables- you know when they talk to their neighbors, and like I know when people drive all the way out here- up this road from town- to get syrup, we give them a little break rather than when we have to drive it into town. So it's things like that that could help- and developing more CSAs, where people feel that connection to the farm- they have an ownership, no matter how tiny it is, it's still an ownership in that enterprise, and they have a stake in that if things don't go well, it affects them, and they learn, you know, how hard it is and the commitments that have to be made." –Green's Sugar House

"The farm to family coupons that are redeemed at farmers markets (Rich: started right here in Poultney)... yup, we were the pilot project for that program, but it's helped. It's helped to get the people in there, to talk about how they can prepare the foods, cause some of them don't even know how to prepare the fresh food. They've been buying food out of a box for a long time. And that's helped. I think programs that reach out to those people who normally wouldn't even think about shopping at a farmers market or health food store or we have a community market in Poultney- that's one group." –Green's Sugar House

"Some people are just not, it's just not on their radar screen. They eat like they ate as kids or... You know when we think about, in order to survive well today you have to cook like your grandmother cooked. But a lot of people's grandmothers didn't cook either. If they're used to processed foods or things that come out of a can or a box, that's where you turn for your food. There needs to be some more education, and demonstration and partnering with families...." –Sue Basset

"But not everybody is on board with us. Some people just look at it as "hippy food". "Oh I don't like that organic stuff, that hippy food" it's like Oh my gosh! Or they'll pick up a can of

organic pumpkin and say "what is it?" and I say "it's pumpkin, it's good pumpkin" "well how do you cook it?" That word is still foreign to a lot of families." –Sue Basset

"There's no easy way to tell people you should change, or you should support X or try it, people have a preconceived notion that this is what I've done, I'm happy doing it, I'll smoke 'til I die and nobody will tell me to do otherwise because I'm still living. I think maybe eventually they may go up there... it's a slow process" –Three Tomatoes

Theme 3: Grower Education

"The other part of that is getting enough farms on line that are, I don't want to say real farms, but that are a little larger than hobbyists, that can supply the demand that has been created." –BJ Hathaway

"There's certainly some farmer education that needs to take place on that as well, on the production side, if you expect Hannaford to carry your product, you damn well better have it. And that's been part of the learning curve as well. When Roots started down there, he had a meeting and got all the people that were going to supply stuff to him in a group and like the vegetable people all wanted to deliver the vegetables Saturday afternoon because Saturday afternoon at the time was the farmer's market which is literally next door to his restaurant. So they wanted to take all of their vegetables that they didn't sell and sell them to the restaurant. It didn't work for them because 1) Saturday afternoon is one of their busiest times. They don't want all this produce coming through the door on a Saturday afternoon that they've got to do something with while they're trying to take care of guests and 2) He wanted to know if he needed 30 heads of lettuce, he doesn't want somebody dropping off 10. He wants his 30 heads of lettuce.... That's the part of the education process that has to go on, is that consistent customer that buys from you every week, they're gonna buy from you... getting some of these other local area farmers to understand that they've got to give a little to get something too if this is truly something you want to make a living at, you've got to do volume enough to make it worthwhile and be willing to give credit to those consumers who are pushing your product for you.... Quite honestly that's something that RAFFL could fulfill. I think to an extent they have, and they certainly have done a good job of getting us resources in the form of speakers that come or conferences...." –BJ Hathaway

"Organization is definitely key because it makes it easy to utilize them as a tool, and they can direct you to specific farmers that will suit you the best. They have a pretty good working relationship- there's good follow-through, sometimes when dealing with a farmer it's pretty loose communication sometimes, and you'll place an order and they forget to deliver it. When you're dealing with RAFFL, it's been a very good and very professional relationship and made it super easy to buy locally from farmers." –Three Tomatoes

Theme 4: Access to Products

"It started down there at Roots and he literally put our name on his menu which got us in front of a whole different audience that didn't necessarily know what we were doing or that the product was available... Which was a really important step in getting people to realize what you have. And I think that, it's not as big a problem as it used to be, but I think that's still one of the big disconnects is getting the audience or the consumers that are interested in that particular product pointed in the direction, or where they can find that product and access to that product. And it's certainly not as difficult as it used to be, now that we have the year round farmer's market now and a lot of that type of thing is better," – BJ Hathaway

"I think it's going to take a couple of things. 1. It's going to take a production level in the area that's gotta expand again to have product enough available to all those consumers. The downside of that is it's probably going to drive the price down a little bit. And then the other part of that is once that level of production gets high enough, then you're going to see more product like in a grocery store or in a general store or someplace where people more commonly frequent." –BJ Hathaway

"I would say transportation is probably a difficult one. Even if someone lives in the downtown area or one of the neighboring sections of the city, transportation is probably always difficult, especially in the winter. Obviously you can walk wherever you want, but maybe some people are disabled or handicapped and they can't do that, or they don't have a car. We have The Bus which is a low-cost transit system, there are taxis in the area, so there's definitely ways to get around but transportation tends to be an issue sometimes." – Brian Perkins

"Well I think too... first the local movement was perceived as something that hippies did... back in the 70s and something. And then it sort of evolved where it was yuppies who were doing it (laughs)... So now it could be perceived as, you know, it's only people who can really afford it and people who are you know...People who are foodies now, that's the new term, is that now there's foodies- and, but, we have to let people know that everybody can be involved, you know, at some level" –Green's Sugar House

"They're busy. They don't cook. And that's a hard thing- they run to the store and they pick up things that are really quick and easy and waiting for a farmer's market to open because they don't run everyday of the week, or going to a health food market may not be as convenient as running into a supermarket. So those, there's a big majority of people who are busy professional people and they just don't cook." –Green's Sugar House

"And I think the farmers go out of their way to be welcoming but if you have in your head that that's not where you shop, you don't go. And sometimes when you look at the price of things, the sticker shock just reinforces that. Or if you don't go and see families that you know there, it just kind of reinforces that that's for some middle class and up folk, and that's... there's some truth in that and it's not by intention but it's just how it goes. I know that they've really tried hard to be welcoming to everybody." – Sue Basset

“Another thing that we’ve talked about ever since RAFFL started—still I think it’ll happen one of these days it hasn’t happened yet—and that is creating a commercial kitchen where various vendors can come in... and individuals come in and lease the thing for however long they need to process what they need... the closest thing we’ve got to it right now is the one at Green Mountain College and they do some of this stuff” –Bill Clark

“So I think one of the things we need to figure out how to do better is how to get local food in places that are not just the farmer’s market. Because another barrier is... I was talking to some people and they’re very, very interested in eating and buying more local food they understand why it’s so important, they understand how delicious it is but as one person put it, I have three kids, and packing them all off on a Saturday morning to go to farmer’s market to buy only a third of my groceries because I still have to go to the grocery store after that to get my toilet paper and my wax paper and my whatever is just too difficult and so the other thing I think Vermont in general is looking at is are there ways beyond just farmer’s markets, restaurants, CSAs, how can we be getting food into the places where people normally would do the majority of their shopping. We’re asking those kinds of questions too, which is kind of cool” –Carol Tashie

“So trying to bring the food to where people are as opposed to having this feeling like ‘how can we get more people to come to farmer’s market’ you know I don’t think that’s the right question. I think the right question is how can we get more food to people. And um sometimes that means bringing it to where they are as opposed to expecting that they’re going to come to where we are” –Carol Tashie

“When I go to the farmer’s market I have kind of a different reaction first of all I am coming face to face with farmer’s right at their booth so there’s this kind of psychological discomfort that says I can’t buy your product, I really want to but I can’t buy your product so it may be for me, there may indeed be bargains but part of the joy of the farmer’s market is that it is kind of festive... it’s also hard to discern what’s a bargain and what isn’t a bargain because you, you know, I can go from one farm stand to another which is part of the shopping process and see who’s selling cucumbers for less than another.... But I’m comparing them against the other farm stands instead of comparing them against Hannafords typically or the supermarkets. So it’s an entirely different shopping experience.” –Pat Menduni

Theme 5: Price

“So the real cost difference to the consumer is pretty marginal right now, it’s less than a \$1 a pound for my ground beef versus what’s in the grocery store. So you’re talking like a 10% difference in price or a little less even, depending on the day. So the price hurdle I don’t think, at least in regards to my stuff, and I think the vegetable growers the same way, is they have expanded their production, the costs of their product has come closer to what an imported product is. And quite frankly the price of fuel is driving that. If you’ve got to truck lettuce from California, on \$4 diesel fuel, a lot of what you’re paying in the grocery store isn’t getting to the lettuce farmer, it’s all that handling in between that required a

tremendous amount of fuel oil and labor. So I think, as time goes on, and especially some of those factors come into play, I think it's going to be more affordable and it's going to be a matter of educating the consumer that it's not this far out unachievable product anymore. I think a lot of people get the idea in their mind that because it's local, it's more expensive and that's not true, maybe 10 years ago that was the case but I don't think that's entirely the case anymore. In fact, a lot of the people that I interact with at the farmer's market say the same thing. A lot of them come to the farmers market every Saturday and that's where they do their grocery shopping. And when they get done there then they stop at the supermarket and pick up any odd items that they might not have been able to find locally. And quite frankly they'll tell you that it's really, you know it might be a little bit more expensive but it's not all that more expensive." –BJ Hathaway

"I'm on the farmer's market board too, but we've really made an effort to try to get it out there that anybody can come shop there. It's not... it goes back to that whole price thing that "I'm going to go to the farmer's market and I'm going to pay twice as much for all the product that's out there." And I think a few years ago that was true." –BJ Hathaway

"I'm selling ground beef right now at \$5.50 a lb, if you go to the grocery store, you're going to pay, for a comparable product with lean percentage and everything else, you're gonna pay \$5, \$5.25 for it, so the price gap isn't as wide as it used to be. And that's part of that, getting more local product on the market, it's going to start to drive that cost into where, it's still not going to be a cheap as... but it's certainly going to, for the same quality product, it's certainly going to get the cost closer to where it seems much more affordable for someone to purchase. You know, "well if I'm only going to pay another 25 cents or 50 cents a package for it" that doesn't seem as bad as "wow, I got to pay twice as much for it" kind of thing. And I think that's where we're gonna have to get to, to really get it out to where you can expand largely. And a lot of the vegetable producers have done the same thing, they've expanded their wintertime production, they've certainly expanded their summertime production, and now they've gotten their product, yeah it might be a little bit more expensive but it's 25 cents more for a head of lettuce or 50 cents more for a head of lettuce than \$3.00 more. So it's a lot more achievable that way." –BJ Hathaway

"There's also the cost thing to it. It's probably cheaper to get your food at an inexpensive grocery market than at the farmer's market or eating out at a restaurant or something."
– Brian Perkins

"Like I said, cost is another thing that's always a big problem. It seems like all of our expenses are always going up and our profit is shrinking. Everybody has to eat, so if we can keep the cost down on food, I think that will go a lot further." –Brian Perkins

"There's a reason why it costs more. This is just my opinion: I'd rather pay a little bit more for something that's local. I don't want to pay less and get less. I want to pay a little bit more to give back to my friends, give back to my farmers, local people. Obviously if you're in a difficult financial situation, like a lot of people in the area, the whole state that is, you really you pay what you get for. So if you pay less, you're probably going to get less. There's

always low cost ways to do things, but I'd rather pay a little bit more and give back to the community. And RAFFL is a good way to do it." –Brian Perkins

"As far... you know like the pig roasts that we do, those aren't small events. You're getting people that might not be able to come to Roots to have a meal, but they get to experience it on a different level in the pig roasts. Same thing with the bakery. You can come into the bakery and get a cup of coffee from Speeder and Earl's for under \$2, so I think that we're reaching all the demographics now. Or you can come in and get a croissant made with Cabot, like we make all our own croissant dough and all our own puff pastry dough, we make all of it. So you're, all the butter comes from Cabot creamery, all the flour comes from King Arthur flour. So they're getting a local product on that level. What we put inside of those comes from Dennis and Carol, like right now we are using spinach that comes from Dennis and Carol and that's in the bagels, we make Spinach bagels. So the flour, the cider that we use in our bagels, all that. So they're getting to experience it on a different level, not just only at Roots, now you get to experience it at Roots bakery too. So I think that's how we are reaching a whole different market as well. So if you couldn't come to Roots to have a sit-down dinner with family and friends, you could come to the bakery and do it with family and friends, without hurting their pocket as much. Does that make sense? So that's how I think that we're really getting to everybody." –Donald Billings

"I think a lot of it is economics and you.... I think it's difficult, it's a difficult subject to talk about because it's about economics. I think that you know, our price points downstairs are comparable to other restaurants. I think you know, we might be a little bit more on some items but not to the point where it's astronomical like "oh my gosh". So if you were to look at like this extra dollar a person, if you could get past the thought of local is so expensive, then I think it could curve it a little bit." –Donald Billings

"I think it's a little bit exclusive, just in terms of price. I mean you pay for what you get here, you know what I mean? It's a lot more expensive than the grocery store but it's well worth it. So I think it's a little exclusive. I wish maybe somehow you could bring more of the community in here. I don't know how you'd do it though." –Anonymous outside farmers market

"Yeah, or why should we pay 2 dollars or 3 dollars a pound for tomatoes when we can go to the grocery store and get them for a dollar or whatever. It's just that whole mentality that is really difficult to change, but you can change a significant percent of it I think, you know each year, but it's gonna take awhile, and there's gonna be some people who are never gonna see it, are never gonna see the need." –Green's Sugar House

"They're used to cheap food, they're not looking at what really goes into getting that tomato or head of lettuce on the shelf." –Green's Sugar House

"I feel like we're really interesting because we have this large segment of the population that's poor or very poor and then we have like the only year-round farmers market in the state. I mean we have this amazing farmers market and there's like this.... there's like this group I'm not sure that we'll ever reach because it's so culturally embedded...I mean, you

can take your food stamps to the farmer's market. (Someone else) I wonder how many people do it... (Back to first person) I mean, people do it. I mean it. Especially during the summer. People are much more likely to go when it's within walking distance (second person) right, right. Which is great! But it's just, it's the same stratification you see in the rest of the country, you see in Rutland, it's not really anything particularly unique it's just this group who eats organic and goes to the farmers market and you know doesn't buy traditionally raised meat and then there's the people who just eat what they can because that's what they can afford. It's not really, I don't think it's particularly unique to Rutland.”
–Respondents at high school

“I know Tara was saying you were trying to pinpoint the market, she was trying to get you to figure out the people that we're not reaching and I've been thinking about it, you know, same old story, affordability. The farmers need money, they can't drop the prices because of feed and etc. etc. so. And that's a big issue with people, you know the local people that can't, you know. And I think a lot of people, the family tradition of sitting down together is not there as much as when we grew up, when I grew up, so people are looking for some fast items. So they purchase fast food items to feed whoever. Maybe the knowledge of what to do with the garden products or whatever. It's a difficult...” –Sissy Hicks

“I mean, who goes to the farmer's markets? It's expensive. And it's the knowledge of again, what are you going to do with this after you buy it. Or maybe they're too intimidated by some of these people. I mean, it's the lower income people I think that we're talking about that just don't, that can't do it. I mean, I go to the farmer's market, it's \$100 before I turn around. And you know that because you probably go. It would be kind of cool, well they have the food banks where they all take their leftover produce and stuff I think and they give it to needy people, so that's great. So they can connect there. But I don't know. I mean that's my perception of it, but I'm not connected that much so....” –Sissy Hicks

“I mean there's definitely you know, I think the perception that some of the locally grown food over at the farmer's market is more expensive, so umm I think that deters some people sometimes, same with at the restaurant- the perception that it's expensive, or people think it's expensive they don't really know ... keeps people away, because it just, it's easy when you don't have a lot of money and the economy is bad to cut out going out to dinner for sure, and you know when you can go to the grocery store and buy something from who knows where for pretty cheap, then that tends to be the way some people go. Then sometimes I think like maybe the older generation, just because that's all they've ever done is go down to the grocery store, it might be a little harder for them to change and branch out” –Three Tomatoes

“I think that many people think that it costs too much. And in part, sometimes it is more expensive. And sometimes it's just a perception that it is. But when you're competing with a Jersey truck farm that's got acres of fields that they're growing things in maybe a much easier way to grow and they've got migrant workers working the fields and so on, I think that it is difficult certainly price-wise for some of our local farmers to keep up with that.” –
Tim Gilbert

"A lot of people think the barriers are cost... I think that we're battling those barriers I think that that might be a little more of a misperception... like when Dennis and I sell lettuce at the farmer's market our lettuce at the farmer's market which was picked the day before and is a big beautiful head and it's fresh and it's clean and it's beautiful and it's going to last in your refrigerator probably you know two weeks because it was just picked is pretty much the same price, sometimes lower, than the price of the head of lettuce that you get at the grocery store that if you don't eat within three days, it's going to go bad. So is there some reality around price, sure, but there are also some myths around price. We're really fortunate in that we're asking those kinds of questions." –Carol Tashie

"I love the farmer's market, and I love supporting local farmers, I do... have to be careful about how much I'm spending and because I tend to eat... I may have a salad for dinner and when I'm talking about a salad it's probably a salad big enough to feed all three of us that's my dinner... so they get consumed readily so I'm obviously looking for quality food that I can afford to buy in abundance and you know enjoy throughout the rest of the week" –Pat Menduni

"I had gone to the winter's farmer's market last winter and um and encountered a rutabaga and thought yes it's time to try and it was delicious, I bought it and paid 5 dollars for that rutabaga, one rutabaga, and I came home and cooked it and really discovered that this is a wonderful taste. And then I was aware of it, now I even knew what it looked like I had often gone to Hannaford's to do my shopping I was moseying through the produce section and I found rutabaga but I also saw that I could buy TWO rutabagas for five dollars and I thought it was treat for me...every now and then I can treat myself to something extra special or something beautiful, tomatoes from the farmer's market, but I can't make a regular habit of spending 5 dollars for one vegetable and I did automatically think, because I tend to, it must make it really very hard for people on a tight budget or a family trying to feed more than one mouth to deal with price discrepancy and I say that not like I'm feeling like I'm being ripped off because I understand the work that's bringing the vegetables to market you know from local farmer's but it is a significant price discrepancy." –Pat Menduni

"There may be great bargains when you go to the farmer's market. It's hard to just see them right off because the prices seem a bit high" –Pat Menduni

Theme 6: Schools

"I think that if there's somehow to get schools more involved, you know that's where it starts." –Donald Billings

"Our county school, I can't sell them product because they use a food service and in order to sell product to a food service you have to have 8 million dollars worth of liability insurance, you have to meet all these criteria.... That's another one of those roadblocks, because there is a perfect audience to get your product out there to because if little Tommy or Susie goes home and says "Geez I had a Hathaway hamburger today and it was really

good Mom and Dad. We should go see if we can get it." that kind of drives the conversation from another angle. It's one more voice talking about it. And so that's something that will probably have to be worked out over time and I think it's already starting to be. Like Castleton State College... part of their contract that so much of their produce came within a certain mile radius." –Donald Billings

"They really are divorced from the land, especially people who have come up here and have been brought up in big cities- their kids, just one generation away, if you ask them where their food comes from, they say it comes from a grocery store- you know and that's it, it stops there, they have no idea how it got to the grocery store, it just comes from the grocery store." –Green's Sugar House

"There was also this um bias they were saying that the kids who were more um more poor wouldn't like it, they wouldn't because it was just such a departure from their normal American diet that was provided here, that they just would push against it. And we found that it really wasn't a socioeconomical kind of thing we had as many affluent kids who were pushing against it because it wasn't something that they were used to but um it was a huge battle for one day for one meal to try something different. We were having to go up against the state, against people who were advocating for their groups and then nobody wanted to try it and right up 'til three days before they were still asking us to have a peanut butter and jelly stand for people who were not willing to try this new" –Teacher at high school

"We've done this thing at the end of the school year for the past three years and jenny did it prior to that too, we have something called yes plan. Yeah, it's year-end studies. It's like a two week thing and kids take a special course or a couple of special courses and um jenny and I and another teacher basically did this like food awareness type of course and you know mostly seniors they were ready to graduate but I feel like we would have maybe a handful of kids within the class who really kind of got it and started thinking about food differently or even thinking about where does it come from. It just isn't really on their radar for most of them they're not the ones cooking for the most part they're not shopping. I think it's a tough group to reach." –Teacher at high school

"We have chickens and we eat them, butcher them. And I know I like the taste of the ones bought at the store more because just they're fatter and they're nicer to eat, but I know it's better to eat our own chickens so it's a decision that sometimes I wanna make it, sometimes I don't" –High school student

"They're trying to do the school gardens and have the cook and stuff work out of the gardens when it's possible, which is great. And this school here, we had a great little chef that would pull the kids in and they would help put together... and they would eat foods that they have never even dreamed of eating before. It's really nice and... it's gaining the knowledge of what to do with some of the food that is produced locally. And it's happening throughout Vermont, the school gardens, which is kinda cool. It's really neat." –Sissy Hicks

"I'm not quite sure there is a way to change peoples' perceptions of that; the best way is to keep educating the kids in the schools, and eating patterns and shopping patterns are

learned at a super early age, and I think that's the best way, is to just.. the kids that are growing up now will eventually be in charge and it'll become the normal." –Three Tomatoes

"People might come to farmer's market and a parent might say my son or daughter said I have to come shop at Radical Roots because your picture is in our school and you know they eat your food in the cafeteria... so there's that kind of overlap. And that's what we love." –Carol Tashie

"So it's really a part of our whole philosophy so um people often say is it a good thing, is it a good business decision for farmer's to sell to schools? You know I said yes for a number of different reasons. First is, you know when you're a farmer... farming is a business, absolutely, and it's a way that we make our living and we do okay it feeds our family, right? It helps our family to live the kind of life that we live. But it's also a really good business decision because like I said earlier, you know sure we sell to schools and we sell to them at a lesser price than to somebody else because they're the schools. But they buy a lot and so you know they'll arrange with us upfront that they want to buy like 2,000 pounds of squash. There's not too many other customers that are going to buy 2,000 pounds of winter squash. So it's a good business decision that way, they buy a lot, yes it's at a lower price but so be it and it's also a good cross-marketing kind of thing. I don't think you go into it for that reason but you know a lot of our really good customers, a lot of our CSA members, got to know us through the school. They're a teacher at the school and they know that we bring food to their school and they know that that's really important to them and so they become a CSA member." –Carol Tashie

"So I think looking at those kinds of things, expanding those, could those be expanded so that we could deliver to schools and so faculty and families from the schools, or people in the communities could be picking up their food at the school, kind of turning the school into a local center for food" –Carol Tashie

Theme 7: The Unexpected Connections

"There is no question that people who go hunting and fishing and eat what they catch or kill are engaging in the most progressive-minded form of local food. Hunting and fishing is the most environmentally, socially, and ethically responsible way to put meat on your table. Part of that is the responsibility that you take for it. It's not surprising to me that some people may not consider themselves to be engaging in this "localvore movement". You know, culturally it's totally different, right? If you've been hunting and fishing your whole life, you don't really think about it like that, it's just what you do. And for a lot of Vermonters that don't have a lot of means, filling the freezer is a really important part of your fall to help get you through the winter, and if you like to fish, it can help you get through the summer as well, well spring summer and fall." –Patrick Berry

"Plus there are culture distinctions too where, you know, your average hunter, depending on where you live, might view people engaging in the whole local food movement as a bunch of hippies. But in their mind they may also think "well, I'm glad they finally caught on to this" –Patrick Berry

"So I'll just talk about the elephant in the room, which is that probably the majority of people who hunt and fish and own guns are more conservative, right? And if you look at the environmental movement over time, it's started to split down the middle, whereas in Vermont especially, the forefathers, the visionaries of the environmental and conservation movement were all Republicans. George Akin, Dean Davis, Senator Stafford, I mean all very visionary conservation-minded folks. That's shifted over time with, I think the advent of the environmental movement where it became more of a liberal cause and you may have more conservative hunters, anglers, and gun owners who don't identify with liberal causes, suddenly not think of themselves at all as environmentalists even though they were the original conservationists." –Patrick Berry

"And I know that Vermont has been rated the top state for supporting local food movements, and I'm really glad you guys are doing this project because I think that hunting and angling is going to be a key part of that. And hopefully some of those cultural divides will dissolve overtime where, you know, Vermont hunters will feel proud to say that they are localvores that are giving their food locally. I'm not sure that they would identify with that just yet, but it's important. And I'll tell you one reason that it's important, too, is that unfortunately, there's this growing anti-farming anti-hunting movement and I've chatted with some of the folks and I'm sure they are well-meaning but boy are they misguided and boy do they have the wrong information and they are not paying attention to some of the broader issues. I mean if people want to feed themselves meat, is there any better way than hunting or local farming? I don't think so. We're not a state that engages in these massive corporate farming activities. And in the last couple of years we have seen this growth of anti-farming, anti-hunting movement that are not interested in a conversation. They are interested in making a point. Fortunately, I think that a lot of elected officials and the legislature have recognized that they really are kind of anti-Vermont in a lot of ways and they've kind of figured it out. SO that's, I would say that that's going to be a problem and I would say that the best way to offset that is to continue to promote hunting and angling as critical parts of that local movement." –Patrick Berry

"RAFFL has been hugely supportive, not just to us but to the whole community, and people have really rallied behind them and uh we would like the opportunity to do more with them, and you know, host dinners for them or meetings or whatever we can do to help them. So, as far as them doing more for us, specifically I'm not sure what that is but we would like to work together more frequently for sure." –Three Tomatoes

Conclusion

Overall, we found that price is still a huge barrier to the proliferation of the local food movement across all social sectors in Rutland County. Every person we interviewed mentioned price as a barrier. This is no different than in the rest of the country. Even though farmers and RAFFL employees we talked to insisted that the price difference is significantly smaller than it used to be and should no longer be a major deterrent, it still is to many families. Some of that is a very real inability to shop at the farmer's market – for example, those individuals that do their shopping at the community cupboard cannot afford to shop at the farmer's market although thankfully they now have access to local food thanks to RAFFL's gleaning programs.

For others, it is about the perception that local food and shopping at the farmer's market is more expensive. While the differential may actually be negligible, this change in price needs to be much better advertised. It would also be beneficial to advertise the difference in the value of food at the farmer's market versus the supermarket (traveling shorter distances, locally grown produce often lasts much longer than supermarket produce). While in some cases the realities around price will be difficult to surmount, some change can occur through myth busting and education around price and food quality.

Education is another crucial element to growing the local food movement. Part of this must occur in schools, as it is important to start behavior building at a young age. There are many programs at schools throughout Rutland County where children eat food from local farmers and have food education incorporated into their curriculum. This is a great start. Some schools, like Rutland High School, however, have difficulty getting local food into their cafeteria for only one day, let alone every day. There is much momentum

around getting local food into schools and our interviews uncovered that this is important, much has been done, and much still needs to be done for those efforts to continue.

We also found that many people don't buy local food and produce because they do not know how to prepare it. Perhaps they grew up eating prepared and canned foods and do not know how to cook or do not want to take the time to cook other foods. Preparing a meal from natural produce certainly takes longer than picking up a prepared meal at the store. Education around food preparation and cooking time could also increase the motivation of some members of the community to begin buying food from local farmers.

While addressing price, education, and access to local products will widen engagement with the local food movement for some groups and individuals, we also explored those groups who eat local food but are not engaged with RAFFL's mission. A huge contingency that RAFFL has not really tapped into is the hunter and angler community. Most hunters and anglers eat what they catch or kill and for some Vermonters, wild game is a major source of protein. Food does not get much more local than that. Outdoorsmen also share an affinity for the undeveloped Vermont landscape, much like RAFFL and the farmers they support. Our interviews suggested that outdoorsmen are inherently conservationists – money from sales of hunting licenses and ammunition, among other supplies, goes directly to fund conservation measures in the state. In other words, local food advocates and the hunting community have a common goal: to protect Vermont's existing working landscape from large-scale development. Yet some interviewees also pointed out a strong political divide. The hunting community tends to be more conservative and does not wish to associate itself with the more liberal local food

movement. Surmounting this division, however difficult it may prove to be, could expand economic support for Vermont's landscape exponentially.

Finally, we found that most people we interviewed engaged with food as a center to their social world. Gardeners and hunters trade food with their neighbors – fresh venison for surplus squash – and mutually support one another through the production of food that is local, even though it is not part of the local food movement. Some farmers, like Rich and Pam Green, take money from their sales and buy food directly from their friends and neighbors in an effort to support them economically. We've learned that this kind of community support is very typical of Rutland and Rutlanders. Continuing to harness this social power and collective enthusiasm in new ways and among new community members will help the county continue to grow its local food movement into a model for integrated food systems across the country.

We have neither given, nor received, any unauthorized aid on this assignment.

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